

Solutions for Including Individuals with Disabilities

A Practical Plan for Managing the Behavior of Students with Disabilities in General Physical Education

BARRY LAVAY

RON FRENCH

HESTER HENDERSON

Behavior management means more than controlling students to make them behave.

Physical education experts agree that a lack of behavior management skills is the most significant barrier to effective teaching (Rink, 2006; Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000). The inability to manage and motivate student behavior is often the number one reason given by beginning teachers for leaving the teaching profession (Rose & Gallup, 2004). The problem is intensified when there are a large number of students with diverse emotional, social, cognitive, and physical abilities in the same physical education class. In recent years, effective behavior management has become even more challenging with the inclusion of an increased number of students identified as at-risk or with serious behavior problems in general physical education classes (Graham, 2001; Loovis, 2005; Rink, 2006; Sherrill, 2004). Based on Sugai et al. (2000), these students represent an estimated one to seven percent of all students in schools.

Many physical educators still maintain a narrow perspective about behavior management. They tend to equate behavior management practices with punishment used to control students or make students behave. The current philosophy has shifted to more positive behavior management practices that foster behavior changes through support and intervention to improve performance and learning (Lavay, French, & Henderson, 2006). The purpose of this article is to describe how to develop a positive behavior plan designed to empower students rather than control their performance and learning. Field-based research and best teaching practices will be integrated with behavior management approaches that have been proven effective in creating a positive physical education environment that is conducive for all students, including students with disabilities. The information and examples provided will guide physical educators through the steps of developing their own plan, customized to reflect their philosophy of behavior management, their behavior management goals, and the characteristics and needs of the students in their classes.

The Behavior Management Eclectic and Ecological Model

Behavior management is interdisciplinary in that it incorporates theories, methods, and best instructional practices from the disciplines of education (Charles, 2005; Walker, Shea, & Bauer, 2007), psychology (Weinberg & Gould, 2003), and physical education (Hellison, 2003; Lavay et al., 2006; Rink, 2006). Behavior management approaches are typically grouped in three categories: behavioral, psychodynamic, and biophysical. No one specific behavior management approach will work all the time with all students. Most physical educators have a dominant behavior management approach or one they prefer to use most often based on their philosophical beliefs as well as their knowledge about and their experiences using that approach.

In this article, the authors use the terms “behavior management plan” and “behavior intervention plan” (BIP). A behavior management plan is an umbrella term used to describe any plan the teacher develops to change behavior. The BIP is a formalized type of behavior management plan that is developed by a team of professionals specifically for a student with a disability who has chronic behavior problems. The development of a behavior management plan for the physical educator to follow is a complex task, and there are many dynamic factors and interactions to consider. The authors believe the physical educator needs a comprehensive behavior management plan that will be applied to all students and classes. When possible, this plan needs to follow a school-wide collaborative effort. This is important for consistency and fairness. All students need to know which appropriate behaviors are expected and which inappropriate behaviors will result in consequences. All teachers, administrators, and support staff must commit to using the behavior management plan.

When a particular student has chronic and intense behavior problems, a formal BIP must be developed (Janney & Snell, 2000). The individualized education program (IEP) team who develops the BIP usually consists of the school psychologist, special education teacher, parents, and a general and/or adapted physical educator depending on the student’s physical education placement. All teachers must agree to the BIP and to using similar techniques to manage the student’s behavior. That is why the BIP must be systematic and flexible enough to allow for the changes that can occur based on the unique needs of the student, the class, other professionals, varied environments, and specific goals of the program.

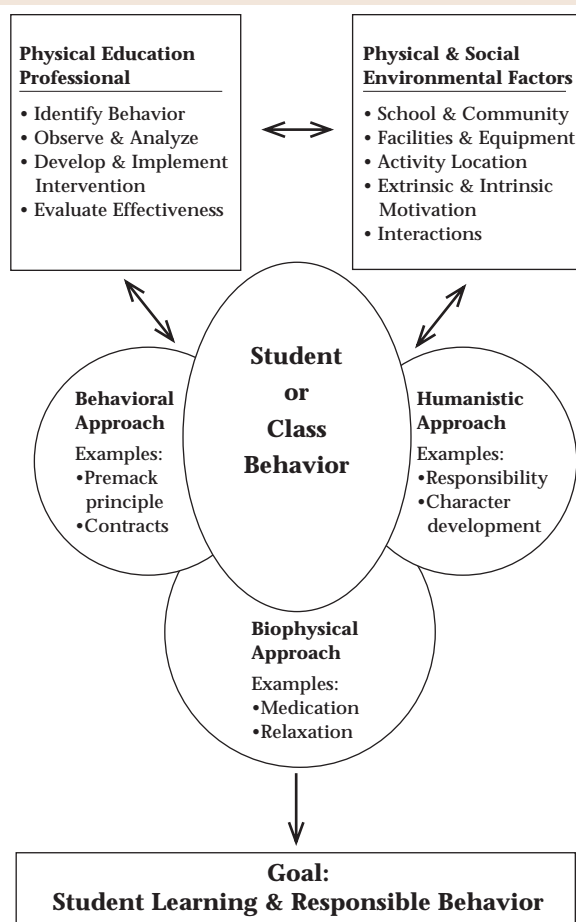
The authors suggest using the behavior management eclectic and ecological model (BMEE) when developing a behavior management plan or BIP (Lavay et al., 2006). This model takes into account the dynamic overlap of the different behavior approaches (eclectic), environmental factors and settings (ecological), different situations, and individual student needs (figure 1). The following example of a student with a disability included in a general physical education class provides an explanation of how to develop a behavior management plan, or BIP, based on the BMEE model in figure 1.

Nick is a 12-year-old student who has been identified as emotionally disturbed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He is in the sixth grade in a public middle school and is assigned to a self-contained special education class for students with mild disabilities. Nick is included in a general physical education class with 30 of his peers. Based on a functional behavioral analysis, his behavior can be inappropriate, off task, and disruptive to himself and the rest of the class.

Designing a Behavior Management Plan

Designing a formal behavior management plan or a BIP generally includes four basic steps: (1) identifying the behavior, (2) observing and analyzing the behavior, (3) developing and

Figure 1. The Behavior Management Eclectic Ecological Model



Source: Lavay, French, & Henderson (2006)

implementing the intervention to change the behavior, and (4) evaluating the plan (see the top left-hand box of the BMEE model in figure 1). The following sections explain each step with examples specific for Nick. In addition, table 1 provides an example of a BIP for Nick developed by the IEP team with input from the general physical education teacher.

Identify the Behavior

The first step in developing a behavior management plan or BIP is to identify the behavior of the student or class that the physical education professional wants to develop, maintain, increase, redirect, or correct. Start by asking the following general questions: “What behaviors do I want Nick or the class to do?” “What behaviors will bring success to Nick or the class?” or “What do I consider inappropriate behavior?” (Lavay et al., 2006).

The behavior must be measurable and defined in objective terms, with a clear beginning and end that both the teacher and Nick can understand. Making the behavior measurable will help the physical educator and Nick to identify it in order to set obtainable, clearly defined goals. For example, a functional behavioral analysis determined that Nick was

Table 1. Nick's Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Student Name: Nick

Today's Date: March 24, 2006

The behavior impeding learning is (describe what it looks like): Nick is wandering around the gym and off task instead of being in his assigned area during physical education class.

It impedes learning because: Nick cannot improve his performance of the skills taught unless he is actively practicing them during class time.

The need for a Behavior Intervention Plan is:

- early stage intervention:
- moderate: X

Frequency of behavior: Occurs during every physical education class.

Duration of behavior: Nick was observed being off task and wandering out of the activity area for 15 of the 20 minutes of activity time and in his designated less than 50% of the time.

Reported and observed by: Physical Education Teacher

Prevention

What are the predictors for the behavior (situation in which the behavior is likely to occur: people, time, place, subject, etc.)? Behavior occurs in physical education class during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations.

What supports the student using the problem behavior? Lack of structure in class.

What is missing or needs to be changed in the environment or curriculum? A more structured setting in physical education class is missing.

Target Behavior

Behavioral Goal: Nick will stay in his designated area during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations until directed to move at least 60% of the time for two consecutive weeks.

Who will establish? Physical education teacher

Who will monitor? Physical education teacher with assistance from Nick's classroom teacher.

Functional Factors and New Behaviors to Teach and Support

Environmental Changes, Teaching Strategies, Necessary Materials:

1. Provide clearly stated rules, routines, and consequences for staying in the designated area.
2. Use well defined start/stop and transition signals.
3. Provide cones and a laminated skill-direction sign at each skill station for Nick to stand by during class instruction.
4. Assign a peer tutor to help Nick.

Reinforcement Procedures for Establishing, Maintaining, and Generalizing Behavior:

1. Physical education teacher and classroom teacher will design a signature index card with a point system to enable Nick to earn agreed-upon privileges if he meets his behavior goal.
2. Add additional behaviors, as Nick understands the point system.

Alternative Behavior the Student Can Do Instead of the Problem Behavior:

1. Ask the physical education teacher or peer tutor for directions and help.
2. Take a one-minute break, or self-directed time-out, and use deep-breathing exercises if frustrated.

Adapted from California Department of Education (2006).

often off task and disruptive in class. Statements such as "You are acting inappropriately" or "You are being disruptive" are simply too general and too vague for Nick to follow easily. Instead, the teacher must clearly explain to Nick what he needs to do in order to act appropriately and not disrupt the class. For example, an appropriate behavior statement would be, "Stay in your designated area during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations until directed to move."

Nick may exhibit so many different inappropriate behav-

iors that the physical educator finds it difficult to determine which behavior to work on first. If this is the case, list all the behaviors you would like to change and prioritize the behaviors in order of importance to Nick's safety and to maintaining class control.

Observe and Analyze the Behavior

Once the physical educator has successfully identified the behavior and defined it in measurable, objective terms, the

next step is to observe and record the behavior to get baseline data. This process is referred to as a Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA). To collect baseline data the physical educator must determine how frequently the behavior occurs during a specified period of time, keep track of how long the behavior lasts, and measure the intensity of the behavior using some type of scale. It is important to observe the behavior as it occurs naturally in the physical activity setting to look for patterns (i.e., the behavior occurs during certain days, settings, or situations). If possible, the physical educator should try to determine whether the behavior occurs more frequently during certain situations or with certain students. Systematically recording and charting the behaviors are the most effective ways to determine baseline data. However, this process can be time consuming and difficult to do while teaching. One simple way that physical educators can record the frequency of a behavior is to keep a piece of tape on their shorts and make a mark each time an identified behavior occurs or to keep a counter on their wrist. Using a personal digital assistant to count behaviors is also effective (Wegis & van der Mars, 2006). It may be possible for Nick's special education classroom teacher or a paraprofessional to help by recording and charting the behavior. See table 1 for the frequency and duration of Nick's off-task behavior. Additional information on ways to record behavior exists in the literature (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987; Lavay et al., 2006; Wegis & van der Mars, 2006).

Once the baseline for the identified behavior is established, it is used to determine the target behavior. For example, Nick's baseline data showed that he was in his designated area an average of 50 percent of the time during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations. A realistic target behavior objective was for "Nick to stay in his designated area during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations until directed to move an average of 60 percent of the time for two consecutive weeks."

Develop and Implement the BIP

The next step is to develop an intervention to achieve the target behavior. The intervention is the phase of the plan in which the physical educator administers one or more behavior techniques to develop, maintain, and increase an identified appropriate behavior, or to redirect or correct an inappropriate behavior. In general, behavioral interventions are quite easy to design, but difficult to administer and maintain in order to effectively empower the student or the class to take control of their own behavior over time.

The physical educator, with student input if possible, can select from a variety of behavioral techniques to use singly or in combination as needed. It is important to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to assist students or the class to take responsibility for their own behavior. To maintain or increase a desired behavior, physical educators might incorporate a self-responsibility level system or use various positive reinforcement techniques, such as social praise, tangible reinforcers, token economy systems, the Premack principle, public posting, behavior contracts, and

group contingencies. To redirect or correct an inappropriate behavior, the physical educator can use individual or group discussion of responsibility, extinction, time-out, or response cost. Table 1 provides examples of behavior interventions used in Nick's BIP.

How, then, does the physical educator go about creating an environment that promotes an atmosphere of performance and learning for the entire class while simultaneously helping Nick demonstrate appropriate behavior? This is the challenge of implementing an effective behavior management plan or BIP in an inclusive physical education setting. The physical educator and Nick's special education teacher must review the class rules, routines, and consequences specific to Nick's behavior. Clear, tangible examples are provided to make sure Nick understands all rules, routines, and consequences for listening to instructions and staying in his designated area during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations until directed to move. To help Nick work on this target behavior, the physical educator develops a start/stop and transition signal and tells Nick he will give him a 30-second hand warning when the signal is coming. The physical educator also explains to Nick that during skill station work he needs to stay near the designated cone and laminated skill-direction sign. The physical educator may also assign a peer tutor (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002) who will travel with Nick during the class and help him understand teacher directions and stay in his designated area. The physical educator or the peer tutor will give Nick one direction at a time, and Nick will repeat (self-talk) each direction back. Finally, Nick and the physical educator will develop a secret signal that Nick can show the teacher if he does not understand the directions or becomes frustrated. He is reminded that he can take a one-minute break, or self-directed time-out, outside of the activity area if the directions or activity become too confusing.

Many interventions fail because the physical educator does not give the plan sufficient time to take effect or does not implement the plan consistently. The teacher needs to recognize that behavior change does not always occur immediately. In fact, some inappropriate behaviors may escalate initially as the student rebels against the change. Therefore, the physical educator must be consistent and patient with the intervention, allowing time for behavior changes to begin to take place. Additional examples of behavior interventions the physical educator can use to promote Nick's behavior appear below, under the heading "Behavior Management Approaches."

Evaluate

The final step in the process is to evaluate the intervention to determine whether it was effective. The physical educator can reflect on questions such as the following:

- Was the target behavior achieved?
- Did the intervention actually contribute to Nick's desired behavioral change?
- Was the intervention long enough for Nick to achieve the desired behavior, or do I need to continue the intervention?
- Do I need to change the reinforcement or corrective

technique to get the desired behavior?

- Did I set the target behavior too high or too low?
- Was the amount of behavior change substantial?
- Were there any intervening variables or influences that could have contributed to Nick's behavior change in addition to, or instead of, the intervention? For example, was Nick's behavior affected by outside influences or environmental factors?
- Is it likely the behavior change in Nick is permanent?
- Can Nick generalize the behavior to other settings?
- Was Nick's behavior change at the expense of other behaviors?
- Will Nick now take responsibility and perform the behavior on his own (Lavay et al., 2006)?
- What might I do differently during the process the next time?

To answer these questions the physical educator will observe Nick over time to determine whether he has learned to take responsibility for this behavior. These questions can also be used to discuss the outcome of the intervention or BIP with all professionals during Nick's next IEP meeting.

Physical and Social Environmental Factors

Physical education environments are complex, dynamic, and open settings. Physical educators must carefully plan for the physical and social environmental factors that affect the student or class (see top right-hand box of figure 1). For example, they could consider having a cone or "poly spot" for Nick to stand near during attendance or skill stations. To be proactive, the physical educator could explain the class rules and routines to Nick before the class starts or assist Nick with the class setting during instruction by assigning him a peer tutor (table 1). It is important to establish a connection between the physical educator's plan, the environment, and student or class learning. The physical educator needs to develop a warm, nurturing, and positive setting that encourages student performance and learning. Without such a connection, the best behavior management plan in the world will be difficult to successfully implement.

Behavior Management Approaches

Typically, three traditional behavior management approaches are used in the public schools. As seen in the center of figure 1, there is an overlapping of the three approaches. The methods selected within an approach are based on the needs of the student or the class. The student's BIP or the behavior management plan for the class is not approach-specific or based on one specific method within an approach, but instead combines the three approaches. Table 2 provides a brief explanation of each of the three behavior management approaches and gives additional examples of interventions that may be appropriate to use with Nick in physical education class.

Summary

Clearly one behavior management approach will not fit all students in every situation. Choosing one approach over another or a combination of approaches can change depend-

ing on the type and severity of the behavior.

If the physical educator is not included in the behavior management process, the plan for the student can be ineffective. This is because the physical educator's emotional, social, and physical environment may not match that of the students' classroom environment. As an active member of the student's BIP on the IEP team, the physical educator needs to be knowledgeable about the behaviors of the students and the teaching environment. This will enable the physical educator to recommend the most appropriate interventions to increase appropriate behaviors and decrease inappropriate behaviors. Even when the behavior management plan or BIP is collaborative, the needs of a student or class vary and unforeseen situations arise (i.e., environmental issues), which is why it is important to temper consistency and structure with flexibility. A good general practice for physical educators is to use the least intrusive supports and intervention in order to promote the desired student behavior.

When developing an intervention, be eclectic and draw from different approaches. For example, reinforcing Nick for demonstrating the desired behavior of following directions and staying in his designated area (behavioral approach), while encouraging Nick to be self-reflective, will help him understand his behavior and guide him through the process of taking responsibility for developing alternate behaviors (humanistic approach).

All students, including children with disabilities, deserve to receive physical education in a positive, safe, and supportive environment that promotes learning. To create a positive learning environment, the physical educator needs to develop a program that includes an effective and supportive behavior management plan. When needed, the physical educator works in a collaborative team to gain the expertise and support of other professionals, such as the special education teacher or adapted physical education specialist (French, Silliman-French, & Block, 2007). The plan that is developed must consider the class, individual students, and the environment, and incorporate the use of different behavior management approaches with instruction.

The authors believe the information presented in this article will challenge physical education professionals to make a systematic and reflective assessment of their own behavior management plan and practices. The procedures and methods described require patience and consistency. Nick's inappropriate behavior will not magically cease, but will require time and patience on the part of everyone involved. No silver bullet or magical way exists to manage behavior in order to promote learning. Physical educators should remember that behavior management is a process designed to assist students in taking responsibility for their behavior, so that they will gain positive learning experiences in physical education.

Additional practical information and ideas regarding effective behavior management practices can be found in the references and at the following web sites: Behavior Management Advisor (www.behavioradvisor.com), Character Counts (www.charactercounts.org), PE Central (PEcentral.

Table 2. Behavior Management Approaches

Behavioral Approach: adheres to the principles of operant conditioning and basically follows the ABC approach (antecedent-behavior-consequence) to maintain or change a behavior. Based on this approach, a relationship exists between the behavior and the actions occurring before the behavior or antecedent, and the consequences occurring after the behavior (Lavay et al., 2006).

Behavioral Approach Used with Nick:

- Antecedents: stimulate or cue the behavior to occur by stating, "Nick, you have 10 seconds to get into your three-person volleyball skill stations."
- Consequences: follow the behavior and consider the probability that the behavior will increase or decrease in the future. Pleasant consequences or reinforcement are used to develop, maintain, and increase behaviors. Praise Nick and others in the class for getting into the three-person group in less than 10 seconds and reward all those groups who meet the criteria with additional game play.
- Each time Nick is in his assigned area and on-task during class, praise him. Nick also brings an index card to physical education class that is kept in his locker. At the completion of class, after Nick is dressed, sign the card if he has performed the agreed, desired behaviors. Behaviors written on the card include (1) "Today I was in my designed attendance, warm-up, and skill station area"; and (2) "I listened to and followed all class directions." Provide the classroom teacher with a brief note on the card explaining Nick's behavior during physical education class. It can be as simple as a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" or a "smiley or frowney face." Once back in class, Nick shows the signed card to his teacher and can earn certain agreed-upon privileges each day for successfully completing both behaviors.

Humanistic Approach: involves asking "why" or determining the underlying psychosocial causes of the behavior of a student or class. The focus of this approach is on the development of self-concept, positive interpersonal relationships, intrinsic motivation, personal and social responsibility, and other qualities of good character (Hellison, 2003).

Humanistic Approach Used with Nick:

- Meet privately after class and ask Nick the following questions regarding staying in his designated area during attendance, warm-ups, and skill stations. "Nick, why do you think you have difficulty staying in your assigned area?" "Nick, why do you think you not staying in your assigned area might concern me?" "Nick, why do you feel it might be important for you to stay in your assigned area?"
- Provide Nick with specific examples of when he did not stay in his assigned area and ask him what he could do differently in the future to take responsibility for his behavior. Nick and his classroom teacher design a self-evaluation chart on an index card where he puts a +1 each time he performs the identified desired behaviors (i.e., staying in his designated area 80% of the time). Each day, at the end of the physical education class and with the help of his peer tutor, he fills out the card. Check Nick's card when he leaves the locker room. On Fridays, he meets with his classroom teacher to evaluate his progress. If Nick meets the target behavior for the agreed-upon period of time (i.e., two consecutive weeks), he is given some type of agreed-upon privilege. This technique is similar to the card used in the behavioral approach except that in this case, the teacher uses self-reflection to get Nick to understand his behavior and guides him through the process of taking responsibility for developing alternate behaviors as well as a means to measure and receive consequences for his behavior.

Biophysical Approach: focuses on what is within an individual, physiologically, that is causing the behavior to occur. The preferred intervention might be relaxation training, biofeedback, diet modification, or medication.

Biophysical Approach Used with Nick:

- Allow Nick to leave the activity area, go off to the side, and take a short break or self-directed time-out whenever he feels upset or frustrated in physical education class. Instruct Nick to think pleasant thoughts and take slow, deep breaths, inhaling through his nose and exhaling out through his mouth while maintaining a rhythm.
- Provide relaxation training to the entire class as a cool down or closure activity. Introduce a progressive relaxation activity, having the class tighten certain muscle groups for 5 to 10 seconds and then relax them for 15 seconds. Other relaxation methods can include yoga, tai chi, static stretching, and imagery and impulse control games.
- If Nick is on any type of medication, it is important that the school nurse, parents, or Nick's classroom teacher inform the physical educator of the type of medication as well as the dosage, schedule, and possible side effects. Potential contraindications can be poor motor performance and an elevated heart rate. Students on medication may exhibit drowsiness, fatigue, headaches, loss of sleep, dizziness, blurred vision, irritability, and mood swings. There is also the possibility of the "rebound effect" that occurs when the medication wears off, causing irritability and mood swings. It is also important to be aware of any "drug holidays" when Nick is taken off the medication or of any transitional periods when the physician adjusts the dosage to determine optimal medication (Lavay, 2005).

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Barry Lavay (blavay@csulb.edu) is a professor in the Department of Kinesiology at California State University in Long Beach, CA 90840. Ron French (f_french@twu.edu) is a professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University in Denton, TX 76240.

Hester Henderson (hester.henderson@health.utah.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, UT 84112.

Tripp

Continued from page 36

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April Tripp (atripp@towson.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Towson University, in Towson, MD 21252. Terry L. Rizzo (trizzo@csusb.edu) is a professor and chair of the Department of Kinesiology at California State University, San Bernardino, CA. Linda Webbert (lwebbert@bcps.org) is an adapted physical education consultant for the Baltimore County Public Schools.